RESTORATION REVIEW

And the angel said,
"FEAR NOT . . . "

"No one expects our life to be easy in this very dangerous and uncertain world."—*President John F. Kennedy*
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CAN WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?

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A DAY IN COURT

I was in court today to stand up for a friend who is having to go through the painful experience of divorce. An acquaintance with *this* case would make you believe in divorce. Sometimes divorce is the lesser of two evils, and life is such that our choices are sometimes between evils, rather than between good and evil.

Our new courthouse in Dallas, only a stone's throw from the assassination scene, gleams with white marble and tinted glass. And it is a beehive of activity, most of which appears to be on the tragic side, for here are housed both the criminal courts and the domestic relations court. One doesn't mingle in its sparkling halls and swift elevators long without hearing tales that move from the sublime to the ridiculous. There was a Negro man wearing the tag "Juror" who looked weary, but when I offered a kindly greeting he would only smile, which made me wonder if there was a rule against saying anything at all, but I forgot to ask. There were all sorts of people: lawyers with young couples, lawyers with lawyers, mothers with daughters, ministers with parishioners, officers, sheriffs, but no children, none at all.

There was an indefinability about it all, and yet I searched for a word to describe the atmosphere. It was too busy to be funereal and too important to be evil. I came up with the word *futility;* yes, there was an aura of futility. Even the amusing things seemed trifling. On the elevator one lawyer was telling of how the defendant had to die before he could finalize a divorce for his client, which seemed funny to him. Another lawyer was telling about getting a divorce for a couple, but they fell in love all over again before they got out of the building, proceeded to buy a marriage license and get married again within the hour. I too thought that rather amusing, but it seemed equally futile.

Another lawyer was instructing a client with a brand-new divorce not to marry within thirty days, for it takes that long for it to be final, during which time the judge can change his mind if he has the notion. He told of how he got a divorce for a city policeman, but forgot to warn him about the thirty days. The policeman married again during that period

and was subsequently arrested for bigamy, and was then fired by the department for improper conduct. Maybe madness would be a better word than futility!

For two hours I sat there waiting for my friend's case to be called, but it proved to be time well spent, for it was such a contrast to a university campus that I sensed a need to tune in on this part of our world too. As I sat there I noticed that Judge Beth Wright presides over one of the domestic relations court. She and I sat on a panel together at a Jewish temple in a symposium on marriage, so I thought I'd slip in and say hello while I was waiting. Standing before her was a young couple whose marriage had gone on the rocks, separated by the two lawyers standing between them as well as the decree of divorce the judge was soon to hand them.

The judge, who I recalled from the symposium believes that divorces are determined even before the marriage, was trying to determine the amount of child-support that the father should provide for the three souls he helped bring into this world. The poor fellow poured out his story of financial woes. He had had it! But the young lady, both firey and attractive, would tug at her lawyer's coat, protesting with her whispering shouts. I had the thought that I'd like to have her in philosophy class. When one of the lawyers said, somewhat beside the point, "Well, your honor, the grandparents aren't going to let those children starve," Judge Wright said: "I suppose that's what's wrong with the marriage. They've depended on their parents so much that they haven't learned to stand on their own feet." After taking her pencil and figuring rather closely to what the mother would need to farm the kids out while she worked, plus other expenses, she ruled that the father should fork over $40 a week, except she didn't use the term *fork over.* It was less than the gal was asking for, but somewhat more than the man had offered.

I followed them out of the courtroom, for I wanted to see it with my own eyes if *they* fell in love all over again and got married again within the hour. He walked out ahead of her as dejected as a football player who has just fumbled in the end zone. He *didn't* step back and hold the gate for her. They didn't speak or even look at each other. She disappeared with her lawyer; he lingered with his lawyer in the lobby, promising to pay him something somehow. Then he walked away, beaten like a rug. I pitied him and had a compulsion to talk to him, but I resisted the temptation. It would have been impertinent. They impressed me differently. The girl scared me, and yet I could see how any man might be attracted to her. He impressed me as a spoiled schoolboy who had asked for what had happened. Wow, there must have been a lot of cat-and-dog fights leading up to that one! Once I was sure they weren't going to do a double-take on their marriage, I hurried back to the judge's horror chamber, where I witnessed still more divorces handed out to young and old alike. I got in my hello to Judge Wright, who suggested we might visit during court recess, but I didn't choose to bother her rest period.

Then I went to the adjoining courtroom where still more domestic problems were being laid bare. I am now convinced that it would be a good regulation to require all those who apply for marriage license to spend one hour in the domestic relations court as an onlooker.

One couple, with the usual two lawyers separating them as they stood before the bench, especially attracted my attention, for it was a case of a father asking the court if he might be allowed to have his little three-year old son spend the night with him "just one night a month," as he pathetically put it. They had been divorced a year or so, and the father had been faithful in child support, and had been visiting his son regularly on weekends for a few hours. But his former wife and her lawyer did not want him to, insisting that the child should not be away from his mother.

I wondered how the judge would decide the case, but I could see the way he was thinking when he asked the mother: "I understand that when you were living together the child could spend the night with in-laws on both sides. Why can't he spend the night with his father and grandparents now that he is a year older?" The couple's resentment toward each other was evident. His feelings were aggravated because his former wife was so unreasonable about letting him be with his own son. He had to go to court to get the child for one night a month. Her countenance revealed hurts that went deep into her soul. She didn't even want to look at him, and I do believe they went through the whole procedure and managed to get out of there without even looking at each other.

I pitied them both and thought it sad that a little boy had to suffer for the failures of his parents. But I was touched by the father's effort to spend the night with his little son. Many fathers in that situation wouldn't care. He told the judge that he would like to have the boy for the entire weekend, *two* nights, just once a month. But the judge allowed only one. In Texas courts, if not in other states, the mother can call the shots pretty well as she pleases. While we have no alimony laws, the state shows little mercy when it comes to child-support. The father goes to jail if he doesn't pay—and pay on time.

As I witnessed these couples dissolving their marriages in court, I thought about their days of romance and happiness. There was their first date, and each suspected later that it must have been love at first sight. She smiled at him then, and he could hardly keep either eyes or hands off her. There was laughter and faith and hope. There was the fun of becoming engaged and planning the wedding, and then the wedding itself. Friends and loved ones wished them well. After awhile there were children.

Then something happened … In the lives of each couple something tragic happened.

There they stand before the judge, not caring either to speak to or to look at each other. Love has turned into hate. A judge must serve as a balance wheel between them for the protection of their children.

The difference the Christ would have made in their lives! In Him they could have found the strength to forbear each other's weaknesses. The love that He inspires would have overcome hurts and resentments. Jesus would have made them kind, thoughtful, and gentle toward each other. Had the Lord been allowed to stand with them in their efforts to build a home, lawyers would not be standing with them now. But did they want the Lord's help? Did they pray together? Did they ask, seek, and knock? Herein is the tragedy, that weak, mortal man attempts to work the miracle of a happy home without drawing upon the spiritual resources available to him. Futility!

Well, our case was soon to be called. But there stood a courtly Negro man with his son, and I supposed the older gentleman was a preacher. The son was dissolving his marriage. His wife had been "running around with another men," according to the testimony, but she wasn't there to contest it. The judge asked the young man to raise his right hand and to swear that he would tell the truth, the whole truth, etc. At this point the father spoke up and said, "He doesn't *swear,* your honor …" The judge kindly suggested that he could say "I affirm" just as well, as if maybe he had encountered that little difficulty many times before.

The father had taught his boy not to swear, and he was there to see that he did not do so even in court, even if he did have to do the talking for his grown, married son. But he didn't teach him how to live. He is convinced that when Jesus said "Swear not at all" He had reference to just such occasions as a court of law, and it would be hard to persuade him that the Lord really meant that one's *character* should be such that swearing (or *affirming* for that matter) would be unnecessary. It appears that Jesus and Paul both were willing to submit to oaths (Matt. 26:63 and 2 Cor. 1:23).

The young Negro left the court with his divorce, and without having to swear. It all seemed so futile.

Our case was called. With a stroke of the judge's pen it was all over. After many hours of pleading and praying, and *years* of waiting—waiting for a return to sanity and decency —a marriage of nearly thirty years was over. I was convinced that this was one marriage that could *not* be saved, and I was sure that our sister in the Lord had done all she could. But I know the husband too, and he too is my brother in the Lord. My efforts had all been futile.

Outside on the street the sun was bright and the air fresh. Everybody was in a hurry. Downtown Dallas was busy. I looked up at the building across the street where Jack Ruby, the world's most celebrated criminal, lives, either sane or insane. Across the way I glanced once again at the place where a young American president was murdered. People were milling around, taking pictures, gaping and pointing at the world's most notorious window, as they always are when I pass that way.

In a rack on the corner the *Dallas News* had black headlines about Vietnam. The coming election was in the air.

I was due to lecture to a class of girls on Plato's view of immortality. So I too hurried along.

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STUDIES ON THE SPIRIT

In the near future there are to be two extensive studies of the Holy Spirit, representing a cross-section of the Restoration Movement. The first one, Dec. 27-28, is to be at Hartford, Ill., just across from St. Louis, at the Church of Christ (non-instrument), 137 E. Maple St. Speakers will include both Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, along with brethren from several Church of Christ-Christian Church groups. The congregation provides free lodging as far as possible, and the sisters provide meals at the building during the day. The subjects are enticing, including the personality of the Spirit, the baptism and gift of the Spirit, the Spirit and prayer life, the Spirit and unity, the fruits of the Spirit. The study is open, with anyone free to ask questions or make comments.

The other study is to be at Southeastern Christian College in Winchester, Ky., Feb. 28-March 3. The subjects are similar to the Hartford list, with one appearing particularly attractive, the relation of the Spirit to paper and ink. Southeastern is associated with the prernillennial wing of non-instrument Churches of Christ, but their invitations to speakers is extending beyond sectarian lines.

We are encouraged that there is this much concern for the Holy Spirit and His relationship to unity and brotherhood. It is especially noteworthy that men of various backgrounds can join hands in a serious study of this kind. It would appear that if unity is in reality the fruit of the Spirit rather than our own work, that we have now begun at the right place.

One interesting feature of the invitation sent out by President Houtz of Southeastern is this paragraph:

> While our invitation to the various speakers indicates nothing as to our doctrinal agreement with them in all matters, it does indicate our love and respect for them as our brothers in Christ, and is to be construed as "fellowship." Their acceptance of our invitation may be construed as broadly or narrowly as the speakers desire.

A paragraph from the Hartford invitation is equally provocative (how do you like that first line?):

> The congregation of saints constituting the church of Christ, meeting at 137 East Maple Street, is unique in some respects. The entire flock, including the four elders believe that the brethren must do something tangible about the problem of division. This little congregation in Hartford, Illinois, just across the river from St. Louis, Missouri, is willing to spend and be spent in promoting the cause of unity and fellowship among all of God's children.

We have cause to be encouraged when little congregations and little colleges take on efforts of this kind. Perhaps their boldness can be explained on the basis of their having less to lose than big churches and big colleges. Or it just may be that many of those who *really* seek truth are in these small places. However it may be explained, it will be awhile yet before we have open meetings like these in the big churches, with all our groups represented. And none of our larger colleges has yet sent out an invitation like that one from Winchester. We have to admit, up to this time at least, that when Abilene or Nashville (or Los Angeles or Searcy) issues an invitation to a man, it is fairly well determined ahead of time what he will say.

When a slip is made and a man says something off the beaten path, a hurried caucus is held by party dignitaries, and the man is called on the carpet for his conduct. This happened only last year at one of our prominent colleges, and it was, by the way, on the subject of the Holy Spirit. In view of what Hartford and Winchester have planned, we would have cause to be surprised if anyone at either of these meetings gets arrested by either the police or the brethren.

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"*How Vast the Resources of His Power …" No. 9*

CAN WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?

Most of us who were brought up in the Church of Christ, and perhaps other wings of the Restoration Movement as well, are a little embarrassed upon: being asked *Are you saved?* It is one of those very few religious questions that we handle with frustrated uncertainty. We have ready answers for most everything, and we can usually give book, chapter, and verse for them, a practice that must surely have some virtue. When asked about our own salvation, we might still quote scripture, but we appear to chafe in the effort to relate the scripture to our own spiritual state.

The best way for you to see this for yourself is to find some serious moment in which you can ask some of our people that sober question *Are you saved?* It should be asked with seriousness and concern, not in a spirit of challenge. It is predictable that almost without

exception the reply will have an element of uncertainty about it. He isn't sure that he is saved. He may hope that he is, or he may even say he believes that he is, but usually he feels obligated to qualify his statement in some way, such as "If I have been faithful . . ."

It is rare for any of our brethren in the Church of Christ to reply with an equivocal "Yes, I am saved." It is almost unheard of that the reply would be emphatic as well as unequivocal: "Yes, indeed I am saved. Praise God that I am!"

It is my thesis in this study that the Christian can *know* that he is saved. He can and should be both emphatic and unequivocal in his avowal of salvation. He can speak with the assurance that Paul did in 2 Tim. 1:12 and say, "I know and I am sure." We furthermore believe that hesitancy and uncertainty in this regard imply an inadequate personal faith. It also suggests that one sees his salvation as dependent upon his own works as it is on the grace of God. It is evident that Paul's certainty was based upon his trust in God's grace than in his own works. \Ve all need to talk as Paul does here: "He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago." (2 Tim. 1:9) If we trusted more in the virtue of God's grace and less in the virtue of our own works, we might be more certain of our salvation.

I must confess that I have not always enjoyed the assurance that I now speak of. Years ago when I enrolled for a few courses at Dallas Seminary, I was asked on the application blank if I were saved. This question, along with several others (including one on whether I were a premillennialist), impressed me as both insipid and sectarian. I proceeded, therefore, to tell them a few things, writing at some length on each of the questions, using appropriate scriptures of course. Because of what they called my "divergent views" they were hesitant to accept me as a student, the real reason being, I now suspect, that they supposed I was not teachable. I was equally hesitant to be a student once this happened, for I figured (and told them so) that with such a parochial view toward truth they could hardly be objective in their studies.

This led to a conference with Dr. John Walvord, who later became the seminary president, who revealed to me that they were in a quandary over an application from a Church of Christ man, which was apparently their first. He went on to explain that from their point of view the Church of Christ was as basically wrong about the gospel as the Roman Catholic Church, that both believed in salvation by works rather than by grace. They therefore doubted that either a Roman priest or a Church of Christ minister would be happy students in their institution. The president thought it strange that I would answer the question *Are you saved?* with "I trust so," but it seemed to confirm his suspicions about Church of Christ doctrine. It so happened that the seminary decided that I was teachable after all, and we all had a good time studying together.

I answer that question differently now. Yes, I am most certainly saved, not by any virtue or righteousness of my own, but by His grace and mercy. I have doubt about my own goodness and faithfulness, but no doubt about my salvation by grace through faith, apart from any works on my part (Eph. 2:8). This does not mean that I was not saved when I was in doubt about it, but it means my faith was weak and misdirected. I believed in the Christ, of course, but I supposed that His grace had to have the cooperation of my works to be effective. But now I can say with Paul: "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law (or through works), then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:21) .

In this same passage Paul writes: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That sounds like a man who *knows.* It brings to mind Augustine's statement: "I believe, therefore I know." Is it not strange that we show more certainty about the loyalty of our friends and the fidelity of our wives than we have in our eternal salvation? Pascal's "The heart has its reasons that reason knows not of" may apply here. If a man's faith in his wife can be so strong that he can say he *knows,* surely his assurance of God's grace can be limitless.

A fitting question for those who suppose they have no right to be sure is *Are you saved today?* If one can't be sure, he may be saved one day but not the next. He may be ready for heaven one moment but not the next. Surely this is not the *living hope* that the scriptures speak of. If one's hope depends on how the balance sheet of debits and credits is at any given moment, then it is a dead hope. If he must be sure that he has no unforgiven sin, or that he has not been remiss in some good deed, before he can know he is saved, then the life of a Christian is doomed to misery and frustration. It is folly for a man to suppose that he just might be able to die at that moment when he has not sinned since praying for forgiveness, or that he might be fortunate enough to go into eternity on one of his good days when his life has been perfect.

What futility this is! We are to pity the man who supposes he can make it to heaven by climbing the stairway of moral perfection and good deeds. He will find himself scaling the stairs at a rapid pace at one moment and then falling flat on his face at the bottom of the stairs the next. By being punctilious in executing his various religious chores he will move six steps upward, and then amidst his pride slip twelve steps downward. This business of trying to make it to heaven through moral arithmetic is a losing cause.

This is the tragedy that Paul describes in Romans 7 when he says: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." Here is the frustration of trying to scale the stairway to heaven by one's own initiative, only to come tumbling down through human weakness. So Paul cries out in

despair: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” His answer is the Christian’s triumph: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There is no other answer, and in this answer the Christian has assurance. And so Paul goes on to say what too few of us seem able to believe: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). And he goes on to say in Romans 8:37-39: “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, not things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *We are more than conquerors!* Without that kind of conviction Christian hope means very little.

Some of us have difficulty in enjoying an assurance of salvation because of fear of unforgiven sins. It is therefore part of our praying terminology in the assembly to say to God, “Forgive us all our unforgiven sins,” as a kind of catch-all prayer for any sin we overlooked. We have no one in the Bible praying that way, and it may be that such a prayer reveals bad theology. There seems to be the idea that if death should catch us with “unforgiven sins” it would be too bad for us. We therefore seek to keep ourselves ready for judgment by saying these magic words, as if God never forgives sins until He hears some such formula. One Christian I know answered the question “Should you die tonight do you believe you would go to heaven?” by saying “I am not sure; I’m afraid I might have some unforgiven sins.”

This is bad theology because once again it makes salvation a matter of works. This sincere Christian certainly believed in the saving power of the Lord, but she also thought it necessary to perform certain rituals in order for God’s grace to be effective in her life. Such a one can pray “Forgive me of all my unforgiven sins” every day, or even several *times* a day, and perhaps feel some degree of assurance at the moment, but there is always the feeling of uncertainty in the anticipation of death. This is an awful religion to live, and one does not have to live it. When Luther was asked by his superiors in the Roman Church what he would give the people in place of the rosary, candles, holy water, etc., he replied “Jesus Christ.” And that is our answer to those who try to keep themselves ready by partaking of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday and going to church on holy Wednesday.

It is impossible for one to live a joyous life if there is any doubt about his salvation. Gal. 5:22 speaks of joy as a fruit of the Spirit, and Rom. 14:17 refers to “joy in the Holy Spirit.” Joy is that sweet: satisfaction that victory is ours through Christ-victory over sin, death and the grave. A prisoner is filled with joy at the news that the governor has pardoned him. *His* joy is limited only by the measure of confidence he has in the governor’s word. If he is sure the governor will do what he says, his joy knows no bounds. A man who can be certain that God has forgiven him, and that his eternal salvation is assured, will be filled with joy. Joy is thus related to hope. Uncertainly begets not only

hopelessness, but a life of despair. The mission of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to fill our hearts with hope, thus making life a joyous and thrilling experience.

Notice the assurance with which Paul writes to Titus in Chapter 3.

"He saved us," he says with confidence, and then explains why: "not because of deeds done by us in righteousness," as if to suggest that if it *were* by our own merit, there would be nothing to depend on. "But in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by *his* grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

This is beautiful religion. Paul sees a rich outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the basis of hope of eternal life. He can speak with assurance of salvation because of the grace and mercy of God. People who are uneasy about their salvation are concerned about their works before God. Since Paul was aware that *his* salvation was not a matter of "deeds done by us in righteousness," but wholly a matter of grace and mercy, he could have confidence.

A confident faith is hardly expressed anywhere as boldly as it is in John's first epistle. *Know* is one of John's favorite terms, and if the apostle in the many "We know" passages could express such confidence in the face of a militant Gnosticism, which denied the reality of the Word in the flesh, then we too can be sure.

In his short epistle John uses "We know" or "Ye know" a dozen times, revealing his assurance of a meaningful and abiding relationship between Christ and his disciples. Let us notice some of these passages as they are rendered by the *New English Bible.*

"Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope before him purifies himself, as Christ is pure." (l John 3:2-3)

We know that we shall be like Him! What a blessed assurance! And notice that we are told that if we have this hope we purify ourselves as Christ is pure. Hope has a cleansing effect on our lives, keeping us from becoming attached to the world and its many allurements.

"My brothers, do not be surprised if the world hates you. We for our part have crossed over from death to life; *this* we know, because we love our brothers." (l John 3:13-14)

We know that we have passed from death to life! Life in the Son is indeed precious, and blessed is the man who *knows* that that life is his. John sees love of the brethren as the sure sign of passing from death to life. Can our quarrelling, divided brotherhood pass that test?

"This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life." (l John 5:13) Other versions say: " ... that you may know that you have eternal life." Is he not also writing to *us* so that we might be assured that we have eternal life. He speaks not of a *quantitative* life, one that will go on forever, even though this is true; but he speaks of a *qualitative* life, a *kind* of life, which is life in the Son. We have *this* life now, and there is no reason why we should not always have it. Jesus said to Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:26). The *life* that he referred to there is the "eternal life" that John says we have *now*.

Notice how John closes his epistle with a series of "We know" statements.

"We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him." (5:18)

"We know that we are God's family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one." (5:19)

"We know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ." (5:20)

Such confidence gives us a blessed resource of power. We too can know that Christ is real (at home, at work, at play), and that we are in Him who is real. We can be equally certain that He will keep us safe and that the evil one cannot touch us. What a blessed peace! What joy!

We have brought ourselves up to be a strange people in matters of this kind. Even when we seem certain that we have the truth, that we are indeed Christ's only church on earth, we are at the same time suspicious of anyone who speaks with the assurance expressed in the foregoing passages. We are certain that we are doctrinally right, but we are less than sure of our own personal salvation.

This may be accounted for by the way we use the term *truth.* To John it meant a right relationship to Christ, as it did to all the writers of the scriptures who speak with such assurance. "If we walk in the light …" means *being in Christ* to John, while to our people it means *being right about everything taught in the New Testament.* So, if one follows the interpretations of our preachers, who have to assume infallibility, he can be right on all points of doctrine, and this is what "having the truth" is made to mean.

My position is that a man may be innocently involved in many erroneous interpretations —"guilty of a thousand errors" as Campbell said of Origin — and still be *right* in his relationship to Christ. While it is true that his relationship with Christ may be strengthened and deepened as he overcomes his erroneous thinking, it is nonetheless the case that Christ is his *now,* that he has eternal life *now,* and that he can know that he is saved. If one had to wait until he could be sure of all his ideas about the Bible before he could be sure of his salvation, then the confidence that Paul and John speak of would never be possible.

We are a people that can be sure we are *right* (that we indeed have *the truth)* and yet unsure about our salvation simply because we do not know what *being right* means, and do not know what *the truth* is.

"The truth" has little or nothing to do with questions such as instrumental music, the Sunday School, premillennialism, church cooperation. There is surely truth and error involved in such questions, but "the truth" as used in scripture is something entirely different: it is the reality that God has acted in history by giving the world the Christ, who has come in the flesh, bringing deliverance from sin.

It is in responding to "the truth," which is the gospel, that makes a man *right* before God. He can never have *the truth* or *be right* by either his own works or by the measure of his own knowledge. One may be doctrinally right about everything and still not have *the truth.* And he may be wrong about matters of doctrine and still have *the truth*.

The point is that *being right* and having *the truth* in scriptural terms has to do with knowing a Person. The early Christians knew the Person before they ever had the New Testament scriptures. They *knew* they were saved long before the *New Testament* made its appearance. When the scriptures did appear, their assurance of salvation was not jeopardized by any errors in understanding. The saints at Rome were no less sure of their salvation if, when they read Paul's letter to them, they did not understand it all. Peter complains that brother Paul wrote many things that are hard to understand, but he does not suggest that one's salvation is dependent upon an understanding of them, though he does warn against *twisting* such scriptures, which implies a deliberate intention to make a passage mean what it does not say (2 Pet. 3:16). Surely one can be honestly mistaken about the scriptures and still know "the truth" in that he is in Christ.

If it is fatal to make salvation dependent upon book knowledge, it is no less fatal to make it dependent upon one's works. "Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. (Rom. 4:4- 5)

If being saved is a matter of work, then we can never be sure, for we cannot know just how much is due us at any given time. But at no time would our works be sufficient to save us. So may God grant that we be among those "who do not work" —meaning that they do not trust in their own work or knowledge—but among those "who trust him who justifies the ungodly."

The question of "once saved, always saved" or Calvin's doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is another subject, which we cannot go into now. But we do not believe it follows from what we have said that if one knows that he is saved that he cannot under any circumstances ever be lost. We know we are saved because we "trust him who justifies the ungodly." But one can quit trusting. He can quit believing. He can quit relying on the grace of God. While he believes with all his heart that Christ is holding his hand, and that no one

can pluck him from the Lord's grasp, it does not follow that he cannot be enamored of the world and on his own volition withdraw his hand from the Master's clasp. The Lord holds us by the *hand,* and so we can turn loose if we choose; He holds us not by the *arm,* thus holding us whether we choose to be held or not. Yea, Paul makes it clear that we "fall away from grace" whenever we seek salvation other than through the grace of God.

But the saint certainly need not fall, Nor must he entertain the slightest notion that he will, kept by God's grace as he is. So the Christian can be fully persuaded that he is saved and firmly believe that it will never be any other way. Why? Because he will keep on trusting, believing, and relying upon God's grace and mercy. Yes, he will "take heed lest he fall," as Paul often urges, but this will take the form of drawing closer and closer to Christ, relying more and more upon the strength that only He can give. He doesn't "take heed" by trying to keep ahead on some ledger of good deeds.

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16) —*the Editor*

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PHARISAISM IN THE CHURCH Of CHRIST

DAVID R. REAGAN

Two thousand years ago when Jesus the Messiah walked upon this earth there existed in the Land of Palestine, amidst the nation of Israel, a peculiar group of religious zealots. The men who composed this group were Jews who had dedicated their lives to the study, exposition and practice of the Law of Moses; and being convinced of their superior righteousness, they had come to set themselves apart into a sect known as the Pharisees, or the "separated ones." Now this was not at all unusual. Many such sects were scattered throughout the land. Some, such as the Essenes, lived in isolated enclaves while others, the Sadducees for instance, were fairly widespread. But of all these groups, the Pharisees seemed to have enjoyed a particularly impressive prestige and influence among the Jewish masses.

The reason for this position of preeminence is now obscure. However, an educated guess can be made based upon the references to the Pharisees contained in both the New Testament and the writings of contemporary historians. It seems that a combination of factors was responsible for the exalted position which the Pharisees enjoyed. For one thing, they had derived some doctrines from the Old Law which appealed to the spiritual hopes of the masses. Of particular importance here were their concepts of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead. The apostle Paul, who was a Pharisee before his conversion to Christianity, implies in the Philippian Letter that the Pharisees were the

strictest of the Jewish sects, and thus they were probably admired in the same way as we admire those today who set high personal standards of morality for them selves. In like manner, the common Jew was no doubt impressed by their zealousness, a trait which was manifested in their proselyting spirit and in their willingness to stand in behalf of their beliefs. But perhaps most important of all was the way in which these men seemed to incorporate the Law into their own lives. In other words, they appeared to practice what they preached, and they were accordingly praised.

Yet, in the eyes of God the religious fervor of the Pharisees was far outweighed by their overwhelming shortcomings. Their sins are well known to anyone who has read the New Testament. Thousands of sermons, beginning with the Lord Himself, have been preached concerning the spiritual shallowness of the Pharisees—their ostentatiousness, their conceit, and especially their hypocrisy. For these men were intent upon religion not for the purpose of pleasing God but to gain the praise of the world, which they received and which Christ promised would be their only reward.

But the all too familiar Pharisaical sins that have been condemned through the ages were really nothing more than manifestations of a much more basic spiritual error, an error that we of the Church of Christ have too long overlooked. I am referring to the Pharisaical attitude of Legalism. What do I mean? I mean the tendency of the Pharisees to approach the scriptures with a hair-splitting, nit-picking attitude attuned to the purpose of gleaning points for polemical debate over the infinite details concerning the externals of the Law while ignoring what must be the true vitality of any religion—its spirit. For you see, religion to the Pharisees was external; it was a religion of superficialities. The condition of the heart was ignored. Motivations and attitudes were of no significance. The joy of religion lay in the intellectual stimulus generated by debate over the infinite nuances, implications, and inferences of the scriptures. Accordingly, contemporary historians asserted that the Pharisees often based their religious practices upon the turn of a sentence or the placement of a single comma.

The New Testament abounds with examples of Pharisaical legalism. Time and time again the Pharisees challenged the Lord concerning His activities on the Sabbath. The humaneness of His acts did not concern them. Instead, it was always the letter of the Law which reigned supreme in their warped perspective. Or again, consider the way in which the Pharisees constantly attempted to embroil Jesus in controversies over the fine points of the Law. Their questions were incessant and devious. They were also masterpieces of legalistic construction, each being designed to put the Lord on the horns of a dilemma. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? What is the greatest commandment? May divorce be for any cause? On and on the questions were posed in a never ending stream of utter contempt and deceit. At times the Lord toyed at them with counter questions which left the Pharisees baffled. Occasionally He met them head-on with a challenge that left his audience reeling

as in the case of the woman caught in adultery. But on at least one occasion, He vented His fury and pronounced upon the Pharisees an absolutely unparalleled rebuke (Matthew 23). Calling them hypocrites and "play actors," He denounced and ridiculed their legalism: (Phillips translation)

> Alas for you, you blind leaders! You say 'If anyone swears by the Temple it amounts to nothing, but if he swears by the gold of the Temple he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools, which is more important, the gold or the Temple which sanctifies the gold? And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar it doesn't matter, but if he swears by the gift placed on the altar he is bound by his oath.' Have you no eyes—which is more important, the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift? Any man who swears by the altar is swearing by the altar and whatever is offered upon it; and anyone who swears by the temple is swearing by the temple and by him who dwells in it; and anyone who swears by Heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by the one who sits upon that throne.

Nor did the Lord stop here. Condemning the Pharisees further as "serpents" and "miserable frauds," Jesus compared them to whitewashed tombs "which look fine on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and all kinds of rottenness." "How," He asked, "do you think you are going to avoid being condemned to the rubbish heap?" Again, striking directly at their legalism, He pointed out that although they were diligent in paying their tithes, they had neglected "the things which carry far more weight in the Law-justice, mercy, and good faith." In short, the Pharisees had killed the life of the Law by suffocating its spirit.

And, in like manner, *we of the Church of Christ have killed the spirit of New Testament Christianity!* Yes, the sin of Pharisaism is upon our hearts. Consequently, the rebuke of Jesus should leave us faint and trembling, for we have been obsessed for over a century with a legalistic restoration of New Testament Christianity, that is, we have been engulfed in a narrow concern for the restoration of outward forms and external appearances. We have devoted our energies to superficialities, and in doing so, we have been more guilty of Pharisaism than were the original Pharisees themselves. At least they were dealing with a legalistic document literally brimming with hundreds of specific rules concerning the conduct of worship and daily life. We, on the other hand, have only four gospels, a vague book of history, and some epistles—all of which are pre-eminently concerned with grace and love. *We have endlessly stressed the passing of the Old Law, but what we have failed to realize is that it was not simply replaced with a New Law.* Instead, there was a qualitative change in which a radically new theology emerged-a theology whose vitality is found in its spirit rather than its letter. (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

The evidence of legalism within the Church of Christ is abundant. All one needs to do is flip through the brotherhood journals and survey such irrelevant trivia as the scripruraliry of stained glass windows, crosses on the communion trays, and pitch pipes

for song leaders. How many times has our brotherhood been shaken to its roots by profound dialogues on the nature of Jesus, grace, or love? Instead we have expended our energies upon such "substantive" issues as orphan's homes, Christian colleges, missionary societies, instrumental music, pre-millenialism, and versions of the Bible. I recently heard of one congregation in Texas that almost split over a sewing machine! It seems that some of the ladies had been mending clothes for the needy on Thursday afternoons. One lady decided to contribute an old sewing machine to the church so that this work might be done more efficiently. The machine was placed in one of the Sunday School rooms, and immediately one of the brethren branded the action as unscriptural—he couldn't find a sewing machine in the New Testament. If that story sounds utterly ridiculous, I might remind you that it was only a very few years ago when the scripruraliry of kitchens in the church building was the hottest item of debate in our brotherhood.

Nor is all this childish clamor anything new. Historians claim that the church was split in the second century -only about 150 years after our Lord's death-over the issue of naked baptism. In other words, some brethren began to argue that baptism was valid only if the candidate was completely naked when immersed. A similar, but apocryphal story has been making the rounds lately. It seems that a small rural congregation decided to build a modern new building. Immediately the congregation split into factions. One group wanted a baptistry while the other wanted to continue baptizing in a stream which they had been using for years. Characteristically, the latter group argued that their position was the only "scriptural" one since it was "obvious" that all baptisms in the New Testament had taken place in running water. The unity of the group was finally saved by a wise gentleman who came up with the perfect compromise: the baptistry was built, but every time someone was baptized, they turned on the water and pulled the plug.

Humorous? Yes, but in a sickening sort of way, for this silly story is characteristic of a neanderthal attitude which dominates our brotherhood.

What has happened is that we have elevated our opinions to sacred dogma. We have taken mere preferences and have applied to them tortuous interpretations of scripture in an attempt to prove that there is only one way to do something-our way. In short, *we have been playing God.*

We have appended our opinions and preferences to the "plan of salvation" and have thus demanded that prospective converts hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized *and* accept the Herald of Truth, Sunday Schools, Bible Colleges, and located ministers while rejecting musical instruments, inter-denominational fellowship, missionary societies, and the operation of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. To put it bluntly, we have been converting people to a creed instead of Christ. What makes all this so absolutely astounding is that we have simultaneously proclaimed with unmitigated pride that we have no creed book but the Bible! Furthermore, we have done all this in the name of New

Testament Christianity despite the fact that the New Testament admonishes us "to avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law for they are unprofitable and futile." (Titus 3:9, RSV)

Now please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that the external form of religion is irrelevant. Form is important, for at some point baptism ceases to be baptism, communion ceases to be communion, and the worship ceases to be worship. But, the New Testament is *not* crystal clear as to the exact form of all the infinite details of church structure and worship procedure. There is no strait-jacket, detailed pattern such as the one found in the Old Testament where the construction of the Temple and the procedure for sacrifice are spelled out in agonizing detail—even to the number of buttons on Aaron's robe. Yes, there is a *general* pattern in the New Testament, but it establishes only three basic points:1) the essentiality of a faith in Jesus which leads one to an act of obedience, namely baptism, 2) the essentiality of worshipping God, and 3) the essentiality of a life of love. We need to face up to this fundamental reality and stop drawing lines of fellowship where none should exist.

As I see it, the challenge to the Church of Christ today is the same as always—the restoration of New Testament Christianity. But the time is long overdue for a concentration upon more than just the restoration of external forms. Instead, we must begin to focus upon the far more challenging and important task of restoring the *spirit* of New Testament Christianity ... the essence of which is *caring* for our fellow man. "To love someone more dearly everyday" is what Christianity is all about, and until we come to this realization, we are going to continue to flail around in the darkness intent on nothing more than the construction and defense of a "whitened sepulcher filled with dead men's bones."

We need to realize too that this spirit which we must restore is much more than a simple periphery participation in impersonal expressions of love—such as contributions to the United Fund, the Red Cross, or even the Church. An institution cannot love for us. The love of Jesus requires a personal involvement, a personal commitment, a personal stand. It is the quality of caring as an individual for other individuals.

Thus, when Jesus was asked to identify the greatest commandment, He responded that we were to love God, but then He added without hesitation that the second was like unto the first: "To love our neighbor as ourself." Here we have two key concepts love and neighbor—and the Lord did not leave the definition of either to the imagination.

He defined the concept of neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Powerfully, this simple story teaches the universality of neighborhood. There is no escaping the point that our neighbor is not simply the man who lives next door or who thinks, acts, talks, and looks like us. No, our neighbor is every human being with whom we come in contact.

Likewise, the Lord defined the concept of love in a moving description of the Day of Judgment (Matthew 25) . Pointing out that the sheep would be divided from the goats, He asserted that the saved would be those who had fed Him when hungry, welcomed Him when lonely, clothed Him when naked, and visited Him when in prison. And the righteous will then ask, "Lord, when did we see *you* hungry or lonely or naked or in prison?" And the Lord will reply, "I assure you that whatever you did for the humblest of my brothers you did for me."

Why? Because each and every human being on the face of this earth is endowed with an eternal spirit breathed into him by his creator, Almighty God. Inevitably, therefore, when we are petty to each other we are petty to God's creation-to those whom God loves. Or again, when we fail to care for our neighbors, we fail to care for those whom our blessed Lord loved enough to give His life. There is no way around it. The truth that we all must face is that *we cannot love Jesus if we cannot love and serve our fellow man.*

And thus, I ask, how long has it been since we cared for anyone other than our own sweet selves? How long?

We drive hours daily through the worst of slums with eyes riveted to the road ahead, completely oblivious to the world around us. And when we get home to the newspaper, we rush quickly—ever so quickly—past the glaring headlines proclaiming man's inhumanity to man and settle instead upon the illusory world of spans, Dear Abby, and Little Orphan Annie.

We spend billions of dollars on a limitless variety of "necessities" ranging from electric toothbrushes to remote controlled color television sets while millions go to bed hungry every night—many of them in our own country.

How long has it been since we cared?

How long since we complimented friend on a job well done? Since we shed a tear of compassion for a neighbor? Since we lent a hand to a stranger in need? In short, how long has it been since we performed one act of human kindness for the pure joy of doing it rather than for praise or for the unmitigated pleasure of charging it off on our income tax?

Yes, the time is long overdue for the restoration of the spirit to New Testament Christianity. As the apostle Paul put it in his simple but powerful way: (Galatians 3:1-4, Phillips)

> Oh you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you? I shall ask you one simple question: Did you receive the Spirit by trying to keep the Law or by believing the message of the gospel? *Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances?* Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere? I simply cannot believe it of you! Does God, who gives you his Spirit and

> works miracles among you, do these things because you have obeyed the Law or because you have believed the gospel? Ask yourselves that. (Emphasis added)

"Ask yourselves that." Here is a question that we cannot escape. Each and everyone of us must look into our souls as only we can, and we must ask whether or not the love of God which passes all understanding lives and breathes in our lives or whether, instead, the Pharisaical legalism of scriptural hair splitting over external forms has caused us to crucify the Son of God afresh.

David Reagan (Ph.D., fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Harvard) is Assistant Professor of Government at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. Presently he is serving as Fulbright Lecturer at the University of the Philippines in Manila. Write him at the American Embassy, U. S. Educational Foundation, Manila. His background is Church of Christ non-instrument. This is the first of several articles we hope to publish from this astute thinker.

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BOOK NOTES

Atonement and Psychotherapy by Don S. Browning is just off the press, and it may be just what a number of our readers are looking for. Its thesis is that insights from psychotherapeutic psychology can be used to clarify our understanding of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is a little expensive at $6.00, but it is that kind of a book.

Another very recent publication is *Studies in Christian Existentialism* by John Macquarrie. Maybe you have heard a lot of nasty things about Existentialism without really being told what it is. This book not only tells you what it is, but it shows how it can be Christian. It is $6.00.

For those who want to use our Credit Plan and pay $5.00 a month or 10% of the balance, whichever is higher, we invite them to consider a few of our larger volumes and sets, which of course come higher. But any or all of the above books can also be purchased on the Credit Plan.

The New Bible Dictionary is nearly 1400 pages and is *rich.* Only $12.95. The twin volume, *T he New Bible Commentary,* covers the entire volume, and does it very well indeed with splendid introductions to each book; 1200 pages; a real bargain at $8.95. Consider this set for a Christmas gift for someone who loves the Bible and wants help in studying it.

Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible is of course the last word in concordances, for it gives you the Greek and Hebrew words along with their translation. Also 50 pages of recent discoveries in Bible Lands by W. F. Albright. I know of no work more useful to the serious Bible student. This is a huge volume with about 1400 large pages, providing a lifetime of study. Only $13.75, or $15.50 if you want it thumb-indexed.

We can still let you have Hastings' *Great Texts of the Bible* for only $56.25. It is usually about $80.00 for this old-line 21-volume set, rich and resourceful.

For those who enjoy getting into the meaning of Biblical language we commend the little volumes by Kenneth Wuest, resourceful but inexpensive, deep and yet not technical. *Golden Nuggets* and *Treasures from the Greek New Testament* are both paperbacks and only 1.45 each. *The Practical Use of the Green New Testament* is hardback, but still only 3.25. Other helpful volumes are *Bypaths in the Greek New Testament* and *Untranslatable Riches,* both hardback and only 2.25.

Remember the review of *Voices of Concern* by James D. Bales, beginning in the January issue. Be sure you have your copy of *Voices of Concern.* We are ready to mail you one the same day your order arrives. Only 3.50.

Resources of Power will be the name of our first hardcover edition of this journal. It will include all issues of 1966, which is volume 8, making a 200 page book, including index. We are planning for a March 15 publication date. We hope to do this each year, but the editions will have to be limited, so we urge you to place your order with us now. The price will be moderate, somewhere around 3.00 or 3.50.

We will send you loose copies of back issues for 15 cents each or 8 for 1.00, and we have them back to the first issue. These are useful to have around to hand or mail to a friend. A few of the *quarterly* numbers remain (prior to 1964) and they are yours at 3 for 1.00.

Why Christians Crack Up is written by a physician, and you'll be impressed with his chapter on "Factor of Satanic Attack." One reason we crack up is that the devil is after us! Does that sound like an M.D.? "Physical Factors in Mental Health" will also interest you. Only 2.95.

We have *Making Ethical Decisions*, a little volume I use in my Ethics class. The chapter on "But Who Wants to be Good?" is alone worth the 1.00 it costs.

Prof. James D. Bales of Harding College has sent us his first installment of his examination of *Voices of Concern: Critical Studies in Church of Christism.* Prof. Robert Meyers of Friends University, editor of the book, will reply to this first piece. This will appear in the January issue, 1967.

This volume of *Restoration Review* will be issued in hardback edition, attractively bound with dust jacket, with "Resources of Power" as the title. Please reserve a copy in advance. The price will be moderate.

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